



**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
BUREAU OF ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY**

**1:00 – 3:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

**December 5, 2022**

**Commission Members in Attendance**

Raymond, Mark — Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS  
Mundrane, Michael — Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, University of Connecticut (UCONN)  
Baillie, Colleen — Director, West Haven Public Library (Connecticut Library Association)  
Caruso, Nick — Senior Staff Associate, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education  
Casey, Doug — Executive Director, CT Commission for Educational Technology  
Cohen, Burt — Staff Attorney, Office of Consumer Counsel  
Dillon, Tom — Independent (Minority Leader of the House)  
Dumais, Chip — Executive Director, Cooperative Education Services (Office of the Governor)  
Elsesser, John — Town Manager, Town of Coventry (CT Council of Small Towns)  
Gopalakrishnan, Ajit — Chief Performance Officer, Connecticut State Department of Education  
Mavrogeanes, Richard — Discover Video (President Pro Tempore of the Senate)  
Provencher, Maura — Vice President of Research and Administration, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges  
Schander, Deborah — State Librarian, Connecticut State Library  
Smith, Josh — Superintendent, Region 15 Public Schools (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)  
Uche, Chinma — Math and Computer Science Teacher, CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering (Connecticut Education Association)  
Williams, Holly — Section Director, Education and Workforce Development, Office of Policy and Management (OPM)

**Others in Attendance**

Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network  
Locandro, Susan — Library Media Specialist, Simsbury Public Schools  
Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS  
Suh, Grace — Chief of Staff, Office of Workforce Strategy



## **Welcome**

Chair Mark Raymond extended a warm greeting to the Commission members and others in attendance. This was the first in-person meeting in nearly three years, also [streamed via CT-N](#). He thanked members for taking the time to travel to Hartford and noted the benefits of meeting in person, allowing for deeper engagement. He also called attention to this as the first day of Computer Science Education Week.

Mark shared that on November 10, the Commission's Executive Director, Doug Casey, received the [2022 State Leader of the Year Award](#) from the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA). His work as the current SETDA Board Chair has informed the Commission's work with best practices from other states and expanded awareness of the Commission's work in executing its statewide ed tech plan.

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Mark welcomed a motion to approve the [September 12, 2022 Commission meeting minutes](#), posted in advance through the Commission's Web site. Nick Caruso moved to approve the minutes, and John Elsesser seconded. The motion carried unanimously, with an abstention from Rich Mavrogeanes.

## **Report of the Executive Director**

Following approval of the previous meeting minutes, Mark welcomed Doug to share highlights from his [December Executive Director's Report](#):

- Digital Equity: Commission efforts continue on the [Digital Equity Program](#), one of several broadband grants created and funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and administered under the Biden Administration's [Internet for All](#) program. The Commission leads the digital equity program on behalf of Connecticut and received approval of funding to support the development of a state digital equity plan. Doug underscored the program's focus of ensuring high-speed, affordable Internet access, devices, and digital literacy skills for all Connecticut residents. A strong inter-agency team provides guidance on the Digital Equity planning to ensure this work aligns with other broadband programs.

Doug provided highlights of the Commission's Digital Equity Summit on October 26, during which state leaders defined and discussed barriers to technology adoption and the potential of having a completely connected and digitally skilled citizenry. Work over the next few months will center on gathering input from members of the community and state leaders on their perceived barriers to technology adoption. He also noted that the Commission would post soon for a Digital Equity Program Manager position to lead this work.



- SETDA State Trends Report: Doug reminded the Commission members of the 2022 SETDA report ([setda.org/priorities/state-trends](https://setda.org/priorities/state-trends)) that reflects the strong ties that state and national leaders have identified between technology, learning, and the general well-being of students and teachers. That report, which highlights Connecticut's leadership position in establishing a dedicated and long-standing digital learning body in the form of the Commission, has been shared more than one million times through prominent media outlets such as *Education Week*. A [subsequent report from SETDA](#) has since highlighted the Commission's role as a national leader in supporting student data privacy.
- Data Privacy Exemption Report: Each year, school districts are obligated under Connecticut Public Act 18-125 to report to the Commission on their use of an exemption to the student data privacy law. Longitudinal data sets from 2018 through 2022 are available on the Connecticut Open Data portal, [data.ct.gov](https://data.ct.gov). Those sets and interactive graphs went live recently, providing the General Assembly and the broader education community with insights into year-over-year trends in student data privacy.
- Annual Report: Doug closed his updates by noting the forthcoming annual report (see [CGS § 61a](#)) of progress against the Commission's state [Education Technology Plan](#). He welcomed input on the report, both in substance and format. He noted that the Commission will be developing an updated plan in the coming year. That plan will include elements of the [June 2022 resolution](#).

John thanked Doug for the updates and suggested that the Commission share news such as the State Leader of the Year Award and State Trends Report with the State House and Senate leadership as well as the Governor's office. He felt these groups should know that the work of the Commission has gained national recognition. Mark acknowledged the substantial work of the group of volunteers who make up the Commission as well as that of its executive director.

### **Digital Learning Advisory Council Report**

Nick Caruso provided a brief summary of the November meeting of the Digital Learning Advisory Council, which he chairs. [Minutes of that meeting](#) were posted to the Commission's Web site and circulated in advance of the December 5 Commission meeting. Nick stated that Advisory Council members suggested ways to translate the recommendations in the Commission's [resolution from June 2022](#) into specific action items. Mark thanked Nick for his updates and indicated that the Commission would review a consolidated list of [potential action items](#) during the report of the Infrastructure Advisory Council, which Tom Dillon chairs.



### **Infrastructure Advisory Council Report**

Tom shared highlights of the Infrastructure Advisory Council meeting, with minutes posted and shared through the [Commission's Web site](#). As with the other advisory council meeting, the Infrastructure group discussed steps the Commission might take to support the June 2022 resolution. Tom referred to a [summary of recommendations](#) that Doug assembled from both advisory councils.

Tom highlighted some of the ideas, which reflect the strength of the cross-disciplinary makeup of the advisory council members. These concepts include use of the 211 system to help residents get online and find training opportunities. The group also suggested that schools could serve as connectivity and training hubs, similar to how some districts operate school-based health clinics. He highlighted the need to link housing to connectivity, perhaps through efforts to ensure that all public or subsidized housing has free, high-speed Internet. Tom thanked all of the [advisory council members](#), including several who also serve as Commission members.

Colleen Bailie welcomed Tom's invitation to explain how libraries enable local residents to engage in the online world through "digital navigator" programs. She noted that four Connecticut libraries had received funding in 2021 for digital navigation programs through an Institute of [Museum and Library Studies](#) grant, leading to the creation of the [Libraries and Partners for Digital Equity program](#). American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding has enabled her institution, the West Haven Public Library, to provide computers and training to residents in her town. She underscored the needs of the aging and noted that one quarter of older residents are veterans. She pointed to the 50 – 60 percent of residents without a high school degree who also do not have Internet access. Libraries have been helping these and other traditionally underserved populations since the inception of computers and the Internet.

To address the need for digital navigators, Chinma Uche pointed to her current and past students as serving in this role. With support through stipends, they could help community members get online and engage in activities that improve their lives.

John thanked Tom for his updates and asked that the recommendations around housing expand to "include housing authorities and housing programs." He also encouraged the use of more assertive, action-oriented language in the suggested next steps. He pointed to the term "digital navigation" as ambiguous; the Commission should clarify this term. Burt Cohen described digital navigation as the process whereby a person helps another individual find a broadband plan that meets their needs, a device, and the skills to engage in activities online that improve their lives. Mark also pointed to a definition from the [National Digital Inclusion Alliance \(NDIA\)](#) and agreed that any public-facing document should include standard definitions for the lay reader.



Doug shared that the federal Digital Equity grant, which the Commission is leading, places a priority on the following “covered populations”: the aging, people with disabilities, ethnic and racial minorities, residents living at or below 150 percent of the poverty line, those incarcerated in State correctional facilities, people with language barriers, residents living in rural areas, and veterans. Because of the wide diversity of these groups, and the people who fit into more than one of these groups, digital navigation needs to be personalized and address the unique set of skills and needs of each person. Deborah Schander agreed and reminded members that educators also need digital navigators to help them make effective use of technology for instruction.

Mark welcomed the advisory council updates from Nick and Tom, as well as the comments from other Commission members. To continue on this thread, he asked Doug to facilitate a discussion of the [recommended next steps](#) to the Commission's resolution.

Doug asked Commission members about the action items that the state as a whole should take, addressing the “what” and the “who” would be involved. For example, changes to State law from the General Assembly might be necessary to provide proper supports to educators. The Commission's statute empowers it to request from other agencies “assistance as may be necessary or appropriate in order to carry out its duties and requirements” ([CGS § 61a](#)). He highlighted the four categories of recommendations: leadership commitment, essential conditions for digital learning, digital equity, and educator supports. With the influx of relief funds, expansion of broadband and devices, and growth in the use of technology for learning, the state has never been better equipped to support the effective use of technology in education.

Josh Smith highlighted the need for ongoing funding to support technology in teaching and learning. Schools received relief funds that helped pay for devices, educational software, and other technology investments. However, devices will need replacing, and software has ongoing subscription costs. Josh advocated for ongoing, sustained funding for districts and asked that the Commission engage with municipalities to raise awareness of their need to include ongoing ed tech allocations for their local education agencies. As the representative from the Connecticut Council of Municipalities (CCM), John agreed with this recommendation. Engaging with groups like CCM, COST, and the councils of governments would help advance the cause of sustained funding. He suggested having a workshop or other means of informing municipal leaders about technology investments.

In his call for systemic investments in digital learning, Josh also cited the need to provide sustained professional development for educators and the inclusion of current pedagogies into teacher pre-service programs. He also called on parents as partners in



supporting education, especially in serving as role models and supports to students in the responsible use of technology.

Rich Mavrogeanes commended the work of the Commission, based on his ~20 years of service as a member. He recommended that the group conduct more outreach and marketing efforts to raise awareness of these important issues. Driving more visitors to the Commission and CEN Web sites and the use of social media channels would help engage the education community and increase visibility of the Commission's work. He also suggested creating a speakers' bureau to include the many experts within the Commission.

Mark offered a few reflections on the resolution and recommended next steps. First, every aspect of teaching should include some use of technology. Student mastery of technology opens doors and serves as a gateway of opportunity. For the broader citizenry in Connecticut, the adoption of digital tools and practices depends on perceived benefits, how using technology can improve their lives. Conveying the "why" technology matters ties well into Rich's point about the need for outreach. Colleen noted that the Connecticut State Library has already created a [public service announcement](#) that it uses to promote its digital navigator program.

Chinma, who serves as a computer science (CS) teacher and past president of the Connecticut Computer Science Teachers Association, explained the strong ties between general digital literacy and CS education. At the elementary level, students learn general, responsible use of devices and online tools. A base mastery of technology serves as the foundation for creating with technology, e.g., coding new software applications. The State has already passed legislation for CS education, and the Commission should support continued efforts to make CS available to all learners, both for advanced study as well as basic digital literacy. Opportunities to learn CS strengthen Connecticut's position from a workforce development perspective, a point that Ajit Gopalakrishnan underscored. He noted Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz' strong promotion of CS education. Doug thanked Chinma for her suggestions and pledged to use the Commission's social media channels to promote [CS Education Week](#).

Michael Mundrane encouraged the use of specific terms to help differentiate between CS as a field of study and, more generally, digital literacy skills. He expressed concern that all people need digital literacy skills, not just those who pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. He also underscored the need for teachers to receive training in technology for instruction, another way of ensuring that students have equitable access to a high-quality education. He reminded members that the Commission is looking at different challenges, including ways to ensure effective use of technology for teaching, using technology to expand learning opportunities, and achieving digital literacy skills among learners of all ages.



In response to these comments, Chinma clarified that the [CS standards](#) that guide Connecticut teachers call for a baseline of computational thinking and digital literacy skills for students, from the early elementary through the middle school grades. She noted that teachers with an awareness of CS can guide students to demonstrate their mastery of coursework through CS applications. She also noted that the National Science Foundation has placed such a priority on CS education that it funded the creation of a course all students should take, [CS Principles](#).

Representing the Office of Policy and Management, Holly Williams pointed to the urgency of equipping educators to teach effectively with technology. Rather than looking only for long-term, whole-system changes among the traditional decision-makers in education, she encouraged the Commission to adopt guidance and initiatives that leverage creative partnerships with, for example, employers, colleges, and other advocacy groups that might spur faster change.

She agreed that funding should follow statute to implement best practices, but even in the absence of proper financial resources, the state can adopt innovative approaches to teaching and learning that also tap intellectual and other types of resources. For example, schools can leverage virtual speakers and guest lecturers at no cost to widen student understanding and engagement and to address teacher shortages. Colleen agreed with these points and referred back to libraries as ongoing centers for learning, providing critical training and support especially during the pandemic.

On the topic of resources, John suggested use of the Connecticut [Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program](#) to fund digital equity work. The program, administered through the Department of Revenue Services, allows corporations to receive tax credits for cash donations to municipalities. He suggested that the Commission lobby the General Assembly to increase the donation limit from \$150,000 to \$250,000; specifically call out digital equity programs as eligible, given that this work is a state priority; and provide a 100 percent (versus the standard 60 percent) tax credit for digital equity programs, as is the case for energy conservation programs.

Deborah welcomed the suggestion and noted a common theme throughout the discussion of positioning technology as integral to all aspects of learning and life. The Commission should embrace Rich's earlier suggestion to communicate this message to decisionmakers. Nick agreed and pointed to the need for outreach to the General Assembly. To help ensure that all students, regardless of the school they attend, have an equitable opportunity to learn, lawmakers need to develop coherent and coordinated education laws and policies. Josh felt that that part of the struggle with next steps is defining the problems the resolution addresses. For example, in addressing leadership, Josh suggested the Commission address what it means to be a leader who



supports best practices in the use of technology for learning. Much of what the Commission has addressed would benefit current concerns, such as social and emotional wellbeing, broader access to CS education, workforce development, and teacher shortages. Tying the work to these current challenges may help spur action around educational reforms and investments.

Doug thanked the members for their suggestions, essential input for developing the Commission's next state ed tech plan. Mark appreciated the discussion as well and reiterated the complex nature of the Commission's work, in that it crosses into virtually every aspect of learning.

### **CEN Updates**

CEN Director Ryan Kocsondy provided an overview of his [printed quarterly updates](#). Highlights include the release of pricing for fiscal year 2024, with rates remaining the same for all tiers, and discounts for members making five-year commitments across certain tiers. Progress continues in the connection of libraries and in making upgrades to their internal networks. This fall, CEN hosted a series of free training sessions on data security, privacy, and breaches, featuring subject-matter experts from across the state.

On the topic of professional development, Ryan encouraged Commission members to spread the word about the [2023 CEN Conference](#), taking place on May 11 at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. Registration is open, as are calls for presentation submissions. CEN has relaunched the [Connecticut Higher Education Roundtable on Information Security](#) (CHERIS), a community of practice for college and university technology leaders. Finally, CEN is waiting for approval from the US Department of the Treasury to move forward with ARPA-funded projects, including a community wireless expansion, grants to towns and libraries to connect to CEN, Network infrastructure upgrades, and funds to help charter schools connect.

### **Public Comment**

Following the CEN report, Mark welcomed a call for public comment, with none given.



### **Scheduled 2023 Meeting Dates**

Mark noted the scheduled meeting dates for 2023:

- Monday, March 6
- Monday, June 5
- Monday, September 11
- Monday, December 4

He shared plans to convene three (3) virtual and one (1) in-person meeting each year. Mark encouraged members to indicate their preferences for meeting in-person versus online, especially if getting together face-to-face made for a more engaging and productive experience.

### **Adjournment**

Mark concluded the meeting by calling for a motion to adjourn, made by Michael and seconded by Chinma. With a unanimous vote to conclude the meeting at approximately 3:00 PM, Mark thanked the members for their continued service to the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Casey  
*Executive Director*  
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Casey". The signature is written in a cursive style.